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GRIT: A STRENGTH THAT NEEDS BALANCE -  
THE RISK OF CROSSING THE ETHICAL RED LINE

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## **Abstract**

"Grit" is an evolving concept that has been perceived in different ways, by different people, in different times. The question that should be answered with this WP, to address the risk that grit without ethics can present, is: "Where does the red line stand between grit being a strength or becoming an issue?". The analysis of the answers to quantitative and qualitative surveys that were conducted will enable to better understand if, when and why people can lose their ethics along their academic or professional journey and grit can become a problem rather than a praised positive character trait.

## **Keywords**

Motivation, perseverance, hard-work, respect

## **Introduction**

### What is grit

Grit is a "determinant of success" (Duckworth & Gross, 2014) that requires individuals to persevere and have passion for their long term goals (Duckworth, Matthews, Kelly, & Peterson, 2007). It has been defined as "the tenacious pursuit of a dominant superordinate goal despite setbacks" (Duckworth & Gross, 2014), as gritty people finish what they start and are seen as not being stubborn when they seek to get from others an honest feedback on their performance and behavior, which is very positive for an organization (Murphy, 2016). Furthermore, gritty people don't fear failure, as they embrace it as part of their progress, since they believe that people can take valuable lessons and learnings even when they go down, as long as they always assume a courageous attitude (Perlis, 2013). All of this means that grit is about making things happen, and about attitude and not being afraid to face competition or failure.

Actually, it is "the secret to success" that people don't need to be born with and that can be acquired through work hard and determination, since "Of so-called born prodigies, only 2%

ever achieve anything remotely resembling success. Yet, 98% of mega successful people possess grit" (Thaler & Koval, 2015).

So, intelligent people need to be gritty in order to succeed, as the rule is that even the smartest persons have to try over and over again to achieve their goals and surpass all the obstacles on their way. Without resilience to stick to their ideas, they might have not conquered what they wanted. As stated by Angela Duckworth, "Nobody is talented enough to not have to work hard, and that's what grit allows you to do" (Showalter, 2011). Duckworth also believed that "there isn't a single highly successful person who hasn't depended on grit". In this way, she mentioned that not to change and abandon goals just because of a novelty, and the perseverance in continuing to pursue the goals despite the obstacles people face, as the two most important qualities of gritty people (Tri, 2013).

### Background

The ideals of persistence and tenacity have been understood as a virtue at least since Aristotle (Gibbs, 2013). In 1907, William James questioned why certain personality traits enabled some individuals to achieve much more than the average (James, 1907).

In fact, already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century grit was considered as a needed character trait that required, in order to succeed, hard work and not only talent, when Galton wrote in 1892 that "Ability alone didn't bring about success in any field" (Duckworth, Matthews, Kelly, & Peterson, 2007).

Grit has been an evolving concept throughout the times and in different societies. As a matter of fact, the meaning of grit has continued to change significantly over the last decades and has evolved from being a personality characteristic associated to action movies tough guys like Rocky Balboa or Dirty Harry (Williams J. , 2015) to a character trait of, for instance, some of the world's top sportsmen as Cristiano Ronaldo - not Lionel Messi, a "born prodigy" - or Michael Jordan, allegedly the greatest basketball player of all time " who didn't make the cut

for his high school varsity basketball team ". The new grit "role models" score much better on ethics and are more politically correct, but still got the so-called "grit factor": guts, resilience, initiative and tenacity (Thaler & Koval, 2015).

### Consequences

Nowadays, grit has acquired a different meaning, more adequate to today's world, where winning at any cost is no longer an option accepted by society at large. It is "The power of doing the right thing - Finding success through a values driven life" (Elsberry & Elsberry, 2010), as James and Terence Elsberry called their book. This means that it is also about character and how essential it is to act within the strict limits of ethics, without using one's elbows and always trying to avoid to step on someone's toes.

As a matter of fact, many people think that grit is not something all children are born with, so it must be learned and developed. This concept has been receiving much more importance than some decades ago and the perception that it can be more important than IQ or talent for long term goals and success is becoming quite popular with today's parents. As Angela Duckworth said, the perception that "people that are smart, talented, kind, curious and come from stable, loving homes generally don't succeed if they don't know how to work hard, remain committed to their goals and persevere through struggles and failure" is a concern of today's parents. So, although the concept of grit has evolved into a feature of character that both parents and educators view as critical to determine a child's ability to achieve long-term success by working hard and persevering, even after failing (Williams J. , 2015), there's a gap in the existing literature on grit, since it does not address the impact that lack of ethics and of respect for others, and for themselves, can have in gritty people and make them cross that thin, but dangerous, red line and make grit become a flaw, rather than the strength it is, if a certain balance is preserved.

Also, grit is about "character, not charisma", as only people with values and principles can have it and not people who "talk a lot but accomplish little" (Thaler & Koval, 2015). So, ethics and

character are two words that are mentioned together several times in this WP, since “ethics” comes from the Greek word “ethos”, which means character (Ethos, 2017), and respect is one of the most important character traits (Anderson, 2000).

### A matter of balance

Nothing in excess or the opposite is positive as “more of a virtue is not always better than less” (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). In the case of grit, when in excess, it can make people stubborn and, oppositely, if there is not enough, it means there is no will or enthusiasm for accomplishing your long-term goals. Likewise, as Aristotle said, “what people are apt to do depends first and foremost upon their character”, and, with this sentence, it is clear how the emphasis on virtue of character over action “is connected with the theme of the good life”, since, as the Greeks realized, “what counts as a satisfactory life for a person will depend to a large extent on what she desires, and desires are more closely tied to character than to reasoning” (Striker, 1987). This importance of grit in a person’s character and ethics is something that is not discussed in the current literature on this theme. That is why this WP intends to study how important it is to draw the clear red line that, if crossed, can easily, and dangerously, turn grit into a negative characteristic, since some people wrongly feel that the best way to deal with competition is, sometimes, to adopt an unethical behavior towards their competitors (Williams R. , 2012).

Most people tend to accept that they are wrong, once a plausible explanation is provided to them, as the smartest ones are the ones that learn from their mistakes. So, gritty people should not put themselves in the extreme position of never accepting that they can be wrong and should take every chance to improve their knowledge, and themselves, since that is what distinguishes gritty people from stubborn organizational members. This thought is completely explained by John’s C. Maxwell quote: “A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them” (Maxwell).

Bearing all this analysis in mind, it becomes clear that, nowadays, it is necessary to strike a balance without any excess between all the four keywords of this WP that portray some of the finest grit characteristics: (i) motivation - to accomplish objectives and always trying to find a way to overcome all obstacles (Halvorson, 2012), which should be paired with passion for the goal you intend to achieve, since people will only excel if they strongly believe in the objective (Duckworth, Matthews, Kelly, & Peterson, 2007); (ii) perseverance - which helps reach success, as gritty people always need to finish what they start and do not let the obstacles demotivate them from reaching their objectives (Karlgaard, 2014), even when disappointed with performance and/or feedback/recognition (Rothermund, 2003), but without ever becoming too insistent or stubborn; and (iii) hard-work - and willingness to sacrifice leisure time, friends and family to improve one's competitiveness, but without giving up on everything that matters to them, since people need a friendly environment around them to better perform; and, finally, (iv) respect - namely for other people, ethics and integrity, which are the real boundaries that determine the red line that should never be crossed while trying to achieve an objective or overcome a hurdle.

These are the perfect ingredients to create a recipe for long-term success and for grit to be a strength and not a flaw, as besides the already known strengths of grit, discussed in several literature reviews, it was only added the value of ethics and respect for yourself and others.

The four keywords of this WP, motivation, perseverance, hard-work, respect, also provide the right backbone to get a proper answer to its central question: "Where does the red line stand between grit being a strength or becoming an issue?". The answer to this question should contribute to demonstrate if grit, when paired with ethics and respect for others and ourselves, is one of the most important characteristics one can have in today's world to get results and become successful in the long run.

## **Method**

Both the deductive and the inductive methods were used in this WP, since a quantitative survey (Study I), as well as several interviews that integrated a qualitative study (Study II), were performed as a basis for this WP. As for the deductive method, it goes from the theory to the data that we need to validate. This method was used to draft the questions to be asked in both Studies, since they were specifically designed, considering the literature review previously made, to help demonstrate how gritty people need to be aware of the ethics' red line. So, the questions were deducted from the theoretical study that was performed, in order to test if that theory made sense or not, and to find out which variables could better represent the notion of grit. The inductive method was applied to the observation of the different variables, since it was necessary to re-think the existing theory and create another method that was aligned with the findings of the collected data. This is the movement of deductive to inductive that is realized throughout this WP. In both Studies the inductive method is used to achieve a generalization, starting from concrete things, in order to move from the data to the theory, whilst the deductive method does the opposite. The inductive was used as an observable method, when a sample is analyzed and it is tried to extrapolate that sample to the universe. So, an induction is done from one set of values to another one. Also, when there is a collection of data and information, and with that a theorization is obtained, then an induction is created, as it is believed from the start that the data can't be replicated to a wider theorization.

Study I was distributed to 270 different students and workers so that the trends and the general perspectives could be identified, thus enabling to move from the data to the theory and understand how excess of grit can lead to unethical behavior, to some data that would better substantiate the question intended to be answered. After that, and since it enables the analysis of "data from a much larger and more representative group" (Blackstone, 2012), Study II was

used in order to analyze, with depth and detail, some observations from the previous step. The inductive method was used as the data collected can increase the current theory content.

Moreover, the survey of Study I was conducted to quantify opinions and behaviors, to compare metrics, and to statistically measure the differences between targets to establish a hierarchy of relative importance within the same target, whilst the interviews of Study II allowed to comprehend the interviewee's motivations behind some of the behaviors and opinions observed, and was more oriented to understand the "why". The Survey II was done after results from Study I were known, so that, after quantifying the results obtained in the survey and analyzing the results, it would be possible to understand the "why" of the results.

The reason to perform both Studies was because both add value to the WP. Study I is relevant in terms of quantity, due to the number of persons interviewed, enabling a proper statistical representation. Afterwards, it can be inducted from the statistical sample to generalization. The challenge of Study I is that, as a big number of people are interviewed, a lot of time can't be dedicated to each one of them, and when a succession of questions is asked to people, they usually only provide very straightforward, and sometimes even superficial answers. In contrast, since more time can be spent with the interviewees, the biggest value Study II brings is to make people more at ease to answer to the questions asked and add more content to the answers, helping to confirm and deeply understand the reasons behind the answers got in Study I. As for Study I, although being less insightful, it was possible to get a good idea of what people thought in numeric terms, and find out the percentage of people that does what is being asked. Thus, this Study was performed in order to better understand why people did or didn't do something, and what were their concerns.

Two samples of students and workers (270 for Study I and 16 for Study II) of different genders, ages and positions in terms of academic and career paths, were questioned, in quantitative and



qualitative terms, with similar questions that are available in Annex I, to assess what they thought about the four chosen keywords: motivation, perseverance, hard-work, and respect.

The results demonstrated that today's grit incorporates all the four above mentioned keywords that encompass the core values that are needed for someone to be considered as being gritty in the 21st century, where, for instance, grit without respect for yourself and others, scales it down again to times that, viewed under today's perspective, could turn grit into a flaw rather than the strength it is today. Furthermore, the Studies showed that grit is also about constant learning, which is demonstrated when the interviewees showed willingness to accept they could be wrong and were ready to learn from their mistakes, as it is when there is no stubbornness that people are more open to improve as a result of their learning experiences.

Finally, the focus of the analysis of the results was in terms of age, to test if the characteristics of grit discussed in this WP changed along people's academic and career paths, in order to better understand if a child's grit is the same as an adult's one.

#### Sampling methodology of Study I

As already mentioned, the sample for the quantitative survey consisted of 270 people, of which 120 were employees between 18 and 67 years of age and 150 were 10 to 27 years old students from all levels, from elementary school to masters' students. Concerning gender, there was a slightly more female skewed sample, with 60% of the students being female and 40% male; and 57% of the employees being female and 43% male. The Study was run in (SurveyMonkey, 1999-2017).

The decision to use this methodology and size of the two samples was due to the objective to quantify opinions/behaviors, to compare metrics, to measure statistically the differences between targets, and to establish a hierarchy of importance within the same target. This was considered to be the ideal sample, since it should not have less than 100/150 persons, because

if there are less than 100 interviewees, each person would be worth more than 1% of the final result and, consequently, the margin of error would increase substantially.

### Sampling methodology of Study II

Regarding the qualitative study, with in-depth interviews, the design of the script was only prepared once the quantitative study was completed, so that its results could be analyzed first and, afterwards, they would be taken into consideration for the qualitative study.

Finally, it was decided to stick to 8+8 individual conversations/interviews, of about 30 minutes each, with students and workers within the same age range as in the quantitative surveys, and with exactly the same gender skew (50% female and 50% male), since a total of 16 interviews evenly divided by two target groups were considered an adequate sample, as more interviews could basically lead to redundant information that would not add value to the overall research.

### Explanation of the script of the questionnaire

In the case of the interview for students, in the beginning the conversation was more in general terms and it was asked to each one of the interviewees to provide (i) his opinion on competitiveness today, since this is relevant as a trigger for answers focusing on ethical or unethical behaviors; (ii) if it has been increasing or not, and if there are certain University degrees where competition between students is more present or if it exists in all of them; and (iii) if it is less, or more, difficult to become successful nowadays.

After that, and always in a more conversational and less formal way, the question asked to each person was if they agreed, or not, that increased competitiveness makes people go sometimes too far and even sacrifice ethics and the respect always due to others. If the answer was affirmative, the follow up question would be if this perception was in general terms or if it was also based on some concrete cases that the person had witnessed, and would also be asked for the interviewee to provide some examples.

Following these questions, the interview would become more personal and it would be asked if that particular person had already been tempted to do some of these things, for instance, tell that one of his colleagues was cheating to a teacher, in order to look good, or if he would be able of copying/plagiarism to get better marks.

During the rest of the interview, other questions would be asked, namely (i) how important they considered that it was to get good grades; (ii) their willingness to sacrifice their leisure time in order to improve their marks; (iii) if having good relationships with family and friends was one of the most important things in life; (iv) their readiness to do whatever it would take to have good grades, and where was their red line in ethics terms; (v) if the decision to choose a working group was only based on the results that might be achieved if a certain person would join in; (vi) if they were stubborn or accepted an adequate explanation, when that was provided to them; (vii) if a disappointing grade motivated them to do better next time or just made them want to give up, and if their perception on these things had changed with age; (viii) if they regretted anything they had done to accomplish their goals; and (ix) if they believed that people became more or less competitive, as they progressed in their studies.

In the case of workers, the questions, initially, were also more in general, as it was asked to each person to provide his opinion on competitiveness today: (i) if it had been increasing or not; (ii) if there were certain professions or activities where competition was more present or if it was in all of them; and (iii) if it was more, or less, difficult to have a successful career today.

After that, as in the case of students, the questions would go deeper into the matter at hand, always in a more conversational and less formal way, and each person would be asked if they agreed, or not, that additional competitiveness makes people go too far and even sacrifice ethics and respect due to others. If the answer was affirmative, it would be asked if this was in general or in concrete cases that the person had witnessed, and some examples were asked. Following

these questions, the interview would become more personal and the interviewees would be asked if they had already felt tempted to do some of these things, for example, to report or make up stories about their colleagues or lie in order to progress in their careers.

During the rest of the interview, other questions would be asked, namely, (i) if they considered recognition as a must; (ii) if they were willing to sacrifice their private lives in order to reach success; (iii) what were their moral limits on the way to become number one; (iv) where was drawn the red line that they would not cross; (v) what mattered most to them: integrity or results; (vi) if, in order to achieve success more quickly, they would be willing to follow dubious shortcuts; (vii) if they were stubborn or accepted well when a suitable explanation was provided to them; (viii) if a disappointing performance motivated them to do better or just made them want to give up; (ix) if they regretted anything they had done to achieve their goals; and (x) if they believed that people became more or less competitive as they progressed in their academic or professional careers.

## **Findings**

First of all, the interpretation and analysis below is solely based on the results of the two Studies that were performed, which is why there are only quotes from Study II and none from any related literature on this subject.

As it was explained on Method, both Studies were conducted to enable a proper understanding on how people's priorities change as they grow older and move to different environments, (as it is the case when people progress in their academic studies or leave school and start working, aiming to have a good career and a good life), and how this can lead people to forget their morals and ethics. Thus, Study II was conducted in order to allow a better understanding of what the interviewees think about the questions that are being asked, namely on competition and ethics, and Study I was made to get results that, afterwards, could be extrapolated to the

universe. But, above all, it was intended that these Studies would help to answer the central question of this WP, which they did as, after completing the Studies and analyzing their results, it was clear that some people can't understand where the red line stands between grit being a strength or becoming a flaw, and so the link between lack of ethics and grit becomes clearer.

## Study I

The main findings for students, are captured in Table I, and, for an easier reading, as a pdf in Annex III. Additional graphs with the results of the survey for Study I can also be found in Annex V.

	Total			Gender						Age									
				Unknown		Female		Male		15-17		14-17		16-22		23-27			
	N	% column	% row	N	% column	N	% column	N	% column	N	% column	N	% column	N	% column	N	% column		
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am fully available to sacrifice my future time (in sports, video games, ...) in order to improve my grades"	Strongly disagree	2	1.3%	0	0.0%	2	2.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.8%	0	0.0%
	Disagree	5	3.3%	0	0.0%	2	2.2%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.8%	3	11.5%
	Somewhat disagree	11	7.2%	0	0.0%	5	5.6%	6	10.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	9.0%	4	15.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	4	2.7%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	1	1.7%	2	9.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.8%	0	0.0%
	Strongly agree	52	34.7%	0	0.0%	34	37.8%	18	30.5%	14	61.7%	5	20.0%	23	28.5%	10	39.5%	8	31.5%
	Total	63	42.0%	1	100.0%	34	37.8%	28	47.5%	4	19.0%	4	16.9%	3	12.0%	6	7.7%	3	11.5%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "Keeping good relationships with friends and family is one of the most important things in my life"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	13	8.7%	0	0.0%	7	7.8%	6	10.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	7	9.0%	5	19.2%
	Somewhat disagree	19	12.7%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	8	13.6%	4	19.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	17.7%	1	3.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	17	11.3%	1	100.0%	9	10.0%	7	11.9%	6	28.6%	3	12.0%	6	7.7%	2	2.8%		
	Strongly agree	58	38.1%	0	0.0%	25	26.5%	23	39.0%	5	42.9%	12	48.0%	31	39.1%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Total	96	64.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.8%	3	11.5%	3	11.5%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	7	4.7%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	4	6.8%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	3	3.8%	3	3.8%	3	11.5%
	Somewhat disagree	11	7.3%	1	100.0%	6	6.7%	4	6.8%	0	0.0%	2	8.0%	6	7.7%	3	3.8%	3	11.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	56	37.2%	0	0.0%	32	35.6%	24	40.7%	19	90.5%	10	40.0%	19	24.4%	8	30.8%	7	28.5%
	Strongly agree	69	45.8%	0	0.0%	37	41.1%	22	37.0%	0	0.0%	11	44.0%	41	52.3%	47	61.5%	3	11.5%
	Total	14	9.2%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	3	5.1%	1	4.8%	2	9.5%	8	10.3%	3	11.5%	1	3.8%
Would you consider rejecting a colleague if you felt he was cheating in order to improve your standing within your senior?	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	24	16.0%	0	0.0%	15	16.7%	9	15.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
Would you consider rejecting a colleague if you felt he was cheating in order to improve your standing within your senior?	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	8	8.9%	5	8.5%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	24	16.0%	0	0.0%	15	16.7%	9	15.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	8	8.9%	5	8.5%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	24	16.0%	0	0.0%	15	16.7%	9	15.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	8	8.9%	5	8.5%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	24	16.0%	0	0.0%	15	16.7%	9	15.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	8	8.9%	5	8.5%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%
	Disagree	6	4.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	3	5.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.4%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%
	Somewhat disagree	16	10.1%	0	0.0%	11	12.2%	7	11.9%	1	4.8%	1	4.0%	11	14.1%	5	19.2%	2	7.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3%	0	0.0%	18	20.0%	17	28.8%	12	57.1%	5	20.0%	12	15.4%	6	23.1%	8	31.5%
	Strongly agree	41	27.2%	0	0.0%	28	28.9%	15	25.0%	2	9.5%	14	56.0%	20	25.6%	5	19.2%	7	28.5%
	Total	24	16.0%	0	0.0%	15	16.7%	9	15.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	14	17.7%	7	9.0%	1	3.8%
How much do you agree with the following sentence: "I am willing to choose a working group based only on the results it can achieve"	Strongly disagree	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	0	0.		

Analyzing the results, it can be concluded that (i) success comes with sacrifices and students understand it well, especially as they grow older and feel more pressure to become the best; (ii) it is more difficult to sacrifice time with family and friends than leisure time; (iii) the students surveyed from 10-17 years of age considered that grades were crucial to succeed, as more relevant than the older students; (iv) it was also the youngest students (10-17 years old) that most strongly agreed that keeping good relationships with friends and family was one of the most important things in their lives; (v) almost all of the 10-13 years old students that were surveyed, somewhat agreed that, when studying, they would do everything they could to ensure they would obtain good marks, while for the older ones, only a majority agreed or strongly agreed with that; (vi) the 18-27 years old students were more willing to choose a working group based only on the results they could achieve than the younger ones, which was related with the importance younger students attach to the relationship with family and friends and to what they were willing to sacrifice, or not, to succeed in their studies; (vii) it is also understood that there are clear red lines for all students, as in the case, for instance, of reporting what a colleague did to a teacher, which the majority of the surveyed students said they wouldn't do; (viii) there are cases, though, of wrong-doing, like copying or plagiarism, which only 10-13 years old students said they wouldn't agree to do, eventually because they were more pure, or naïve, than the older ones, since this type of behavior comes usually later on their academic life, as competition grows. As for the remaining students, they are almost evenly divided, even though only the group of 18-22 years old (the ones supposedly in universities) has a percentage of more than 50% answering that they would be able to do it; (ix) the majority of the students is not stubborn and accepted they were wrong when a proper explanation was provided to them, with all the 10-13 and 23-27 years old students saying they would for sure accept an adequate explanation; (x) in terms of perseverance and motivation to move on from disappointing marks, almost all of the 10-13 years old surveyed students and the majority of the 23-27 years old surveyed

students, answered that a bad mark motivated them to try to do better next time, while a bit more than half of the 14-17 years old surveyed students said the same, and half of the 18-22 years old one's have answered that they would be demotivated and give up after receiving a bad grade; (xi) and, finally, the great majority of the younger students have never done anything they came to regret in order to achieve their goals, as in (viii), with a bit over half of the interviewees from 14-22 years old saying that they didn't regret anything (the 18-22 more than the 14-17), and the older ones (23-27 years of age) being evenly split regarding this question. In the case of workers, the main findings of Study I are captured in Table II, and, for an easier reading, as a pdf in Annex IV. Additional graphs can also be found in Annex VI.

	Total	Gender						Age														
		Unknown			Female			Male			18-25			26-35			36-50			51-67		
		N	% column	% row	N	% column	% row	N	% column	% row	N	% column	% row	N	% column	% row	N	% column	% row	N	% column	% row
Strong feelings Disagree	2	1.7%	0	0.0%	2	2.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	2	1.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	1	2.0%	1	2.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	1	3.6%	1	3.6%
Somehow disagree	2	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	2	1.7%	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	1	2.0%	1	2.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Strongly agree	64	48.3%	0	0.0%	9	12.3%	8	15.7%	0	0.0%	3	10.7%	7	20.0%	4	13.6%	3	10.7%	3	10.7%	3	10.7%
Agree	17	12.9%	0	0.0%	37	49.4%	27	42.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	20	30.3%	23	36.7%	16	27.1%	14	22.0%	18	27.1%
Strongly agree	30	22.6%	0	0.0%	17	22.6%	13	19.5%	0	0.0%	13	40.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	11.6%	5	17.9%	8	24.0%
Unknown	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	0	0.0%
Total	120	100.0%	1	0.8%	89	100.0%	81	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	2	7.1%	23	80.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	109	92.5%	1	100.0%	46	56.4%	42	84.9%	1	100.0%	22	78.9%	33	64.9%	27	56.5%	27	56.5%	27	56.5%	27	56.5%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	10	100.0%	7	70.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%
This would give me the ability to act in a positive way to be successful - I'm not sure	120	100.0%	1	100.0%	64	100.0%	51	100.0%	1	100.0%	28	100.0%	33	100.0%	28	100.0%	28	100.0%	28			

Interviewed workers understand that (i) in order to improve one's performance, reach success, and get recognition, they must make certain sacrifices, although, in this sample, participants are more willing to make sacrifices with their leisure time, rather than with the time spent with family or friends, with the youngest workers (18-25 years old) being more willing to make any type of sacrifices; (ii) recognition is more valued, again, by the younger ones (18-25 years old); (iii) as it happened with the students survey, it is understood that there are clear red lines and moral limits on the way to become number one, as, for instance, to report what a colleague did to a boss before talking to him, with most of the workers answering they would never do anything that would hurt a colleague; (iv) to value integrity over results is also something that the vast majority of participants agrees with, although, almost half of the 18-25 years old workers would consider doubtful short cuts in order to achieve better and quicker results; (v) the majority of workers are not stubborn and could accept they were wrong when a suitable explanation was provided to them, with all the 18-25 and 26-35 years old workers saying they would for sure accept it; (vi) almost all the workers surveyed answered that, when receiving a bad performance review, they wouldn't quit or give up and would try to do better next time, except for the 26-35 years old surveyed workers who are a bit more doubtful if a negative performance review would motivate them and make them persist in improving their performance; (vii) lastly, most of the workers have never done anything they came to regret in order to achieve their goals, with the exception of more than half of the 36-50 years old workers, who recognized they had already done something they came to regret to achieve their goals.

## Study II

All the written transcripts of the in-depth interviews are attached as an Annex (Annex II) to this WP. The Findings of Study II were, in the case of the interviewed students, that:

They all agreed on how clear the increase in competitiveness has been during the last years and as they progress in their studies, with most of them saying they only started to really feel it in



the university, as it was the moment when everyone really started competing against each other for the job they wanted to get when they would graduate.

The global economic crisis added pressure to students, as now there are less job opportunities for them, once they finish their studies. To obtain Bachelor and Masters Degrees became much more common, and was no longer a distinctive factor between students as it was before.

The pressure of increased competition is now being translated more and more in ethical hurdles that some students are considering to trespass in order to become number one and surpass their colleagues, even if sometimes they might have to harm them. The younger students were the less willing to copy during tests, with the majority of the older students not mentioning any regret for having done so.

However, there was still a red line in what concerns the respect due to others, that was considered more difficult to cross, with no interviewees showing any disposition to harm other people in order to succeed in their goals, (as, for instance, would be to report on a colleague that was cheating), although a few students would consider acting like that in extreme cases.

All surveyed students considered family and friends as a motivational factor to face and overcome difficulties. They also said that preferred to work with friends than with the best students, as they considered that group projects function better like that. Also, all students denied being stubborn when a plausible explanation was provided, although the majority of the older students answered that they were more reticent in accepting the explanations provided.

Persistence tends to appear later on in students, since many of them admitted that even if they don't feel motivated with disappointing marks, they felt under pressure by growing competition, while progressing in their studies, in order to try and increase their grades, as the latter became more important for their future career than it was the situation when they were younger. The majority also agreed that, while moving up on their academic path, students became more competitive towards others and with themselves in order to be the best.

To sum up, older students tend to be more hard-working and perseverant, in order to reach whatever they aim for in their future. The motivation to come back after a fall is something that comes as part of a kind of survival instinct of the students, in the last years of the academic path, as most of them are worried not to succeed after school if they cannot cope with a setback. All of the participants showed that they valued integrity and respect towards others, even when they had something to gain if ever they would cross that red line. Thus, grit is not innate and depends on age. It is developed with increased competition, when students get closer to the beginning of their working life and career. It came from the need and willingness to achieve one's goals through motivation to surpass difficulties, perseverance to never give up, and a lot of hard-work. But not at any cost, always respecting one's principles, ethics and the feelings of other people, in order to succeed in a correct way and without any later regrets.

As it happened for students, the core findings for workers in Study II were in line with the results from Study I. All the written transcripts of the in-depth interviews are attached as an Annex (Annex II) to this WP.

With this said, it was a general opinion between the interviewees that competitiveness at work has been increasing for the past few years. It is much more difficult to succeed today, and one needs to work much harder now, than some years ago, in order to have a successful career. In very competitive times like today, it is building a successful and a serious career that is becoming more important and not only the expectation of having a job and living a normal life. The interviewed workers felt that their jobs were more at stake today and they were more willing to sacrifice their leisure time, and even sometimes the time spent with family or friends, even though it was considered to be easier to do so when you didn't have a family. Anyway, the first years were considered as being crucial and a period where it was necessary to work harder in order to progress in one's career.

It was also common belief by most of the interviewees that this competitiveness at work was a common factor to most professions, although they also mentioned it happened more often in the jobs that are more difficult to get into and where more studies are required, like lawyers and medical doctors, since there is more competition and for a longer period of time.

Even with all this mounting pressure, no participants showed any desire or willingness to harm any of its colleagues in order to succeed, as they all felt that their ethics, moral background and respect for others are more important, namely on the long run, than succeeding at any cost, and most of them had never witnessed any serious ethical issue. They all felt that their integrity was more important than achieving results at any cost, as they considered that entering into doubtful shortcuts would make them quickly regret it and not achieve their long-term career objectives. Recognition is something that shows how age is relevant, as the interviewed younger workers were more likely to value approval and recognition on how they performed their work than the older ones. The explanation was that in one's first years at work people feel less self-assured. Also, stubbornness is not a characteristic that depends on age, since all participants said that although they did not like to be wrong, they accepted the remarks made to them if they considered them to be well-grounded and constructive. They could still feel aggravated with them, but would view those remarks as a valuable learning experience.

To sum up, and considering all the analysis performed of the relevant information, it becomes clear that competitiveness and grit depend on age as they are verified more frequently the older a person is. (i) It is mainly among younger workers that you find more often people that feel the need to work-harder in order to succeed. (ii) People that are more afraid to lose their jobs need to be more perseverant. (iii) Motivation is something that lacks more in younger workers, as they are the ones that try harder, but also seem to give up more easily earlier in their careers. (iv) Respect is a feature that doesn't change with age and is valued by all interviewed workers.

The takeaway is that grit is the strength that can help a worker succeed in his career, in the long term and even in a competitive environment, if he does not cross the ethical red line.

## **Analysis**

Examining the results, it is possible to understand, due to Study II, that there are two different types of competitiveness that strongly condition the answer of the interviewees.

In a first level, we have the younger students. For them, ethics is about comradeship and solidarity, and integrity is only a moral problem. Meaning, implicitly, that there is the perception that lack of ethics works, and, likewise, unethical behavior becomes a temptation.

In this domain, the answers show a certain distinction between (i) not helping or not lending your notes to a colleague, which just show lack of comradeship, (ii) copying by a colleague or, finally, (iii) harming a colleague in any way, which is considered as an unacceptable behavior.

The lack of ethics works for students, since their target is just to get good marks in order to enter university. In this case, their families and keeping friends are more important because they are a pleasure, rather than because they play a certain role or have a particular function.

In the case of older students, the situation is not very different. The initial objective of all students is to get a job when they finish their education, and that is a reason for the lack of ethics to continue to work for them, which means that integrity continues to be a moral issue.

Nevertheless, keeping family and friends is, in this case, more functional and some of the interviewees mention that in order to get a job you need to have social skills, like generosity, and solidarity, among other important characteristics. The lack of ethics is more linked to the fact of harming someone else. As the 4<sup>th</sup> student interviewed in Study II mentioned (women, 19 years old, studying Economics), as kids “grow older they discover that there are fewer opportunities” and they “need to be more competitive and have less solidarity”. She also stated that after graduating from high school “we become more competitive and everything becomes more real. While before we were only competing to get good grades, now we are competing for

our future and our career”. These phrases portray how a competitive academic life can make gritty people lose their ethics along their journey and encompass some of the reasons why there is a certain grit paradox, linked with ethics, which explains why grit is not always a strength.

As for workers, ethics is no longer associated to comradeship, and lack of ethics is completely linked to harming another person, for instance, lying or setting traps to colleagues. But the most important is that the goal starts to be the progression in the career and, because of that, integrity is no longer a moral issue but rather a functional one, as it starts to become clear that the lack of ethics doesn’t work, at least in the long term and that this kind of behavior leads nowhere, if the person wants to build a solid career path. In the workplace, sooner or later, everything turns out to be known. In the long run there are no secrets, and what really matters is competence, and, clearly, it is not by playing tricks based on fraud that competence will be demonstrated. As the 3<sup>rd</sup> worker interviewed in Survey II (man, 29 years old, Economist) stated he would not be willing to take any doubtful short cuts “since it is something that affects forever your career, as the less solid is the basis that leads to a successful career, less stable it is to remain on the top”. He also mentioned that “To try to make a career that is not anchored in hard work, persistence and integrity, will never give results in the medium/long term”. This proves that, in the long run, unethical behavior will make more harm than good to a person’s career.

To conclude, the evidence gathered in these Studies contributed to show that the vast majority of the interviewees valued integrity over results, and, with age, grit becomes more and more incompatible with unethical behaviors that don’t work in the long run. What works and makes sense for a gritty person who wants to build a successful career, is to pair grit with integrity, ethics and respect for others, and stop before reaching the red line. That is how people can prevent such a strong and important characteristic as grit to ever become a flaw, because it is true that too much of a good thing can become a bad thing. That can happen to people that don’t understand that this is not just a moral choice, as many thought when they were students, but is

rather a functional choice that can determine people's future and career at work. So, rather than losing, a truly gritty person tends to recover his ethics throughout his life, since that is what really makes sense for them from a functional, and not only a moral, standpoint.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

In the literature review it is hard to find a reference to any flaw linked to grit. That is why this WP was centered in explaining how something as good, positive and needed in today's competitive society can turn into an issue if people don't pay attention not to crossing the ethical and moral red line. There has to be a balance in grit, so that it is not acceptable to do anything unethical in the journey to success, but there is still the need of determination to achieve objectives. In this sense, it is possible to understand how grit is not only about accomplishing passionate long-term objectives (Duckworth, Matthews, Kelly, & Peterson, 2007), but also about the need to do it whilst respecting your own, as well as other people's moral standards. Otherwise, it won't be the journey a person wants to have in the way to build a successful career, as it is demonstrated by the answers of the Studies performed.

In summary, the conclusions of these Studies indicate that lack of ethics, or at least not having fear of repercussions for less moral behaviors, will disappear during a gritty person's career as they start to see their ethics under a functional and not only a moral standpoint, as it becomes clear that negative actions do not remain unpunished in the medium/long run. So, even if people with an unethical behavior are able to successfully reach their long-term objectives with motivation, perseverance and hard-work, they might not be able to remain successful for a long time, even if momentarily they managed to reach their goals, since sooner or later their lack of integrity might be exposed and they may lose everything they built. This means that, at the end of the day, it was demonstrated with both Studies that true grit doesn't exist without ethics.

This WP study has also practical, and useful, implications, which become visible with the analysis of both studies. Unethical behaviors, as copying or not lending notes to help colleagues,

are seen, by the majority of the interviewed students, as acceptable, or, at least, as not immoral and reprehensible. Many students still consider these behaviors not only as tolerable, but also as needed in such a competitive world. This portrays the urgency to demonstrate the need to respect ethical codes in their education, even though the conclusions of the study show how truly gritty people understand during their career path that unethical behaviors won't bring medium/long term success, or at least it won't last, since it will, eventually, come to harm them and their careers in the future. So, even with all the competition, it is important that an ethical red line exists, in order for grit to be balanced and continues being a positive character trait.

### **Limitations and possible future studies**

In terms of limitations of both Studies, quantitative and qualitative, it should be mentioned the possibility that the people that were surveyed and interviewed can develop some type of “impression management”, since there is always the risk that they, conscious or unconsciously, have a goal-directed process (Impression Management, 2016), in which they attempt to control the impression formed of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). However, with Study II, this problem can happen less frequently as the interviews last longer and the interviewer has more opportunities to get the interviewee off guard and get to the core of his feelings more easily. Similarly, both Studies were made to survey and interview directly the persons, which also makes their answers more biased and less clear, as it deals with the impressions of people talking about themselves and not, for instance, their bosses, colleagues or subordinates opinions on them, which would increase the substance and veracity of the answers of both researches. In terms of what can be done to further improve the conclusions of this study, and considering all the possibilities that this WP already raises for future work, it could be positive to enlarge the scope of the current study, so that it wouldn't be a study just focused on Portuguese people, more specifically from Lisbon and mostly with a university background. The study could, thus, also be performed in other parts of Portugal and even in other countries, encompassing bigger

samples, so that the results obtained would be less parochial and more global and its results could be used to better understand the grit phenomenon at global level, and see if it depends on being performed in different regions and countries, with different values and educational levels. Also, a 360° study could be made, where not only the individuals would be interviewed, but also their colleagues, bosses and reports, to get a complete picture of the individual and not only rely on its own perception of himself, in order to better deal with the impression management.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, grit is clearly “the secret to success” (Thaler & Koval, 2015), but is also a concept that still needs further analysis. Hopefully, this WP will contribute to throw some light on the connection that grit needs to establish with the four chosen keywords (motivation, perseverance, hard-work and respect), namely with the last one, paired with integrity and ethics, in order for grit to be balanced and, consequently, be a strength rather than a flaw and, thus, a recipe for long term success, which is the response to the question that is meant to be answered in this WP, meaning that the red line starts where ethics stops.

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